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The Gilgal of the Colored Race.

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# BACCALAUREATE DISCOURSE,

BY

*President Wm. W. PATTON, D. D.,*

DELIVERED IN THE

CHAPEL OF HOWARD UNIVERSITY,

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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## A PREFATORY WORD.

Many labor under the false impression that those who are seeking to elevate the colored race in the United States are blind to their faults and weaknesses; that they flatter them as to their character and abilities; and that they are working in the interest of some political party. If such will peruse the following discourse, recently preached to the students of the Howard University, Washington, D. C., they will learn their error, and will find that its instructors are as faithful in pointing out the defects and sins of the negro as they are in standing up for his civil, intellectual, and religious rights; that they are as courageous to repress an untimely and exaggerated ambition as they are to claim for him an open pathway to all that is valuable to the other members of the human family. It is the prayer of the preacher that his colored friends to whom this discourse may come in print may be stimulated by it to find their Gilgal of deliverance from ancient reproach; and that the benevolent throughout the land may judge whether Howard University is not helping to bridge the gulf between the differing races and sections of our beloved country.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *September 22d, 1880.*

# DISCOURSE.

And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal [A Rolling-Away] unto this day."—JOSHUA V, 9.

VERY significant has been the interest which the colored race in this country has felt in the history of the Israelites, as given in the Old Testament. During the two centuries of their slave-experience, in our Southern States, they fed their imaginations and their hopes upon the ancient fortunes of God's chosen people. Next to their familiarity with the fact that Jesus came into the world to be the Saviour of men, was their knowledge of Moses as the deliverer of the enslaved Israelites. The scenes of the Book of Exodus were more real to them than were the events of the War of the Revolution to the white race at their side. They had a simple-hearted faith that history would repeat itself; that in due time, God would again deliver his oppressed Israel; and that the oppressors would once more see the desolated fields, the polluted sanctuaries, the death of the first-born, and the catastrophe of the Red Sea. How their minds lingered upon that distant age, and gathered hope for their own future, touchingly appears from the rude strains of their now famous slave-hymns, in such words as these: "Did not old Pharaoh get lost in the Red Sea?" "When the children were in bondage, They cried unto the Lord to turn back Pharaoh's army, Hallelu!" And especially in the words made familiar by the "Jubilee Singers:" "Go down, Moses! Way down in Egypt-Land: Tell old Pharaoh, Let my people go!" And God honored this faith of the downtrodden! Their unartistic but devout hymns were accepted; their humble prayers were heard; and the jubilant song of Miriam on the free side of the Red Sea had its echo, more than three thousand years after, on the shores of the Atlantic and the Gulf, and from the banks of the Ohio and the Mississippi.

The interest of the colored race should not limit itself to the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt; but should follow those ancient freedmen through the sad discipline of the desert, as God was compelled to train them by a long and trying process for self-government, seeking to remove the marks and disqualifications of their former condition. The text draws attention to an event of this nature, which occurred immediately after the crossing of the Jordan and prior to the first assault upon the Canaanites; in connection with which I would indicate, *What Gilgal was to the Israelites; and the fact that what is needed by the colored race in this country is, to find its Gilgal.*

A certain "reproach of Egypt" lay upon the Israelites. A disgraceful fact existed, which pointed back to their old condition of bondage, and which needed to be removed before they would be prepared for the full fruition of their new condition of freedom. Naturally, the effect of bondage had been to repress their nobler and to develop their baser qualities. This was manifest when they worshiped the golden calf at the very foot of Sinai: when they longed to return to Egypt, and to submit again to slavery, if they could only secure the lost "flesh-pots;" when they shrank from conflict with the Canaanites, that God sentenced the whole adult generation to die in the desert, outside of the promised land; and when they omitted the covenant-rite of circumcision, which designated them as God's peculiar people. This last fact (which is as if the Christian Church should neglect baptism or the Lord's Supper) left them in utter disgrace, as if they were but so many heathen and had been cast off and disowned by Jehovah.

This disgrace God took means to remove. He had the covenant-rite once more applied to the people, and he thus publicly sealed them again as his chosen nation, who had come into a better spirit, who had risen above the old heathen slave-character, and who were now prepared to inherit the promised land. And the place where this was done was called Gilgal (a Hebrew word which means A Rolling Away), because there the reproach which came from their old slave-condition in Egypt was forever removed, and the sign of their degradation was taken away.

Now, my hearers, mark my solemn words: What the colored people of the United States (who may be regarded as God's modern Israel) need at this present moment is, to find their Gilgal, and to "roll away the reproach of Egypt!" What this reproach is, and how it may be rolled away, I shall endeavor briefly to state. In doing this, I shall speak frankly, as befits a true friend; who has not suddenly become such, in the changed circumstances of late years, but has been identified from his youth with the rights and interests of the colored race; and who shared in the labors and sacrifices of those who bore the once dishonorable name of "Abolitionist." Having lived to see in the overthrow of slavery the fruit of the toil and self-denial, and the answer to the prayers which went up from believing supplicants at the Throne of Grace, I am now anxious to witness the rapid removal of the evil results of that system of wrong; that the last earmark of oppression may vanish from sight. Give me, then, your confidence, as well as your patient attention, that what I say may be received without offense, and may be welcomed as the utterance of one who has at heart your highest good.

*What is "the reproach of Egypt," so to speak, under which God's freed people in this land still abide, and which needs to be "rolled away"?* It is of a three-fold nature—industrial, intellectual, and moral; and to each of these points must we direct attention.

I. *There is an industrial reproach.* Human nature in all races has an aversion to toilsome labor. Strong motives are needed to overcome this feeling; and such motives are found in the necessity of providing food, raiment, and shelter for one's self and family; in the hope of wealth and its resultant comforts; and in a pride of accomplishment which goes with acquired skill. But such motives were withheld from the slave, and there was substituted the fear of punishment. He thus pursued industrial toil under a degrading influence, which made both him and his oppressor regard manual labor with dislike and contempt, as associated with bondage and inconsistent with a condition of freedom. It was restricted, also, to the coarsest kinds of industry—such as called for little besides muscular strength and would not lead to a degree of intelligence and skill dangerous to the system—the hoeing of corn, tobacco, cotton, and sugar-cane and the performance of domestic labor. When emancipation occurred, the natural result was, that freedom was expected by many to bring relief from the necessity of toil. The interruption of agricultural labor by the war and the excitements of the new order of things after peace came, produced also in thousands a reluctance to return to plantation work, and a tendency to flock to the cities, and to live upon the proceeds of miscellaneous jobs, picked up here and there, from day to day. But the effect of this is to prevent a habit of steady industry, especially in the children, as they grow up, and to keep families in a thriftless and impoverished condition.

This result is not peculiar to the black race. Look at the "poor whites" of the South, scattered through the agricultural regions, and known by such names as "Sand-hillers," "Clay-eaters," "White trash," "Crackers," etc. They, too, were victims of slavery, though indirectly; for they were taught by it to dislike and despise steady labor, and to fall into habits of idleness and shiftlessness, till, in ignorance and worthless character, they were often sunk lower than their black brethren, and became the subjects of ridicule by the slaves. Clad in butternut-colored homespun cloth, they loafed around the groceries and liquor saloons, hunted and fished, and ran with the hounds when a fugitive bondman was to be caught or an Abolitionist to be lynched; but they did little work. Their bloodless countenances and their ague-shaken forms could be seen hovering around an occasional railway station, while their women, of like appearance, "dipped" snuff in their miserable hovels. If they had not served as voting machines, being often unable to read the ballots which they cast at the dictation of their superiors, they would have been destitute of any quality to save them from utter and universal contempt. When the war came, they made good food for powder, and their previous rough life and acquaintance with hardship fitted them for soldiers in that wild country. But peace found them without vocation, the most helpless and wretched part of the population.

The freedmen soon resumed labor, and disproved the accusations

of their enemies, by bringing the cotton, sugar, and tobacco crops up to an equality with the largest production under slavery; thus showing that the Negro will work for wages, when he has a fair chance, and even when great difficulties are thrown in his way. But I want the colored people to do more than excel the poor whites of the South in industry and thrift. I want them to equal the best laborers in the land—the Irish, the Germans, the Scandinavians, the native Yankees. But such a result cannot be gained by hap-hazard or unsteady methods, such as too often accompany a disposition to crowd into the cities, and to pick up an uncertain living by doing a little of everything. That plan is very apt to lead to doing a good deal of nothing, while “Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.” It is so with the white poor in the great cities of the North, when work is hard to obtain, and multitudes are reduced to beggary and starvation, and led into intemperance and crime.

There is nothing which so favors industrious habits and regular gains as fixed pursuits, connected with farming, the mechanic arts, manufactures, and other regular callings, which give daily occupation, summer and winter. Just so far as a dislike of steady work of one kind, and a preference for a shiftless, uncertain employment at odd jobs are seen in a large number of the colored people, accompanied with feasting and frolics in the summer, and with poverty, rags, begging, and idleness during the winter, it will be impossible to hide the “reproach of Egypt,” the degrading sign of the old bondage. The same will be true, also, while any marked deficiency shall be seen in colored workmen as to the spirit and manner of their labor, as regards punctuality, promptness, carefulness, steadiness, perseverance, quickness of motion, a readiness to perceive what is wanted, accuracy in carrying out orders, and interest in the work done. Slavery cultivated habits opposed to all these qualities, and thus inflicted great injury on its victims. As they had no personal gain to expect from industrial virtues, their unrequited toil was performed reluctantly, slowly, carelessly, with little order or method or economy. And then as their owners kept them in ignorance, and used them only for the lowest class of labor, their minds necessarily were dull and their motions slow and heavy. What else was to be expected from a condition of slavery? But it will not do to allow these habits to remain, under freedom; because they are a badge of the old condition, a reminder of the effect of bondage, “a reproach of Egypt.” When colored men do not keep steadily at a piece of work, but labor to-day and are gone to-morrow, on some trifling excuse; when they easily break engagements; when they are not half so good at working as they are at inventing reasons for not working; when they waste time by slow movements, shorten the day at both ends, and do a vast amount of resting, gazing, disputing, and going off for water, or tobacco, or to speak to somebody that is passing; when it takes five minutes for them to get an idea, and five more to start to carry it out—then



those who know what good, steady, industrious, quick-moving laborers are, cannot help seeing the contrast, and the impression is unfavorable to the reputation of the race. This is a "reproach" that must be "rolled away." There must be a "Gilgal" found for it somehow. Colored men must acquire a character for steady industry, for fidelity to engagements, for alertness of movement, and for ability in permanent trades and occupations.

This last point is worthy of special attention from the colored people and their friends. They must be furnished with a more diversified industry, if they are to rid themselves of the old marks of bondage. In the Northern cities the Irish immigrants and their descendants were long unable to rise in the respect of the community, because they remained mere day-laborers—carrying the hod, sweeping the streets, working about the wharves, and digging and wheeling earth along the canals and railways. It was right and needful that they should do such things; but so long as they did nothing else, they seemed to the native American to be a barbarous and uncultivated Celtic race. And so will the African race appear, if to a reasonable extent they do not add higher employments to digging and hoeing, white-washing and boot-blackening, waiting and peddling. They need to learn the regular mechanical trades, and become skillful carpenters, blacksmiths, stonecutters, masons, bricklayers, plasterers, printers, bookbinders, tailors, cabinet-makers, shipbuilders, gardeners, and machinists; and also to enter upon trade and commerce, and be salesmen, book-keepers, manufacturers, retail and wholesale merchants, seamen, and navigators. Of pursuits which call for a higher education I shall speak in a moment, under another head. I know that a wicked and cruel prejudice limits the opportunity of the colored youth to learn the various trades, and of skilled colored journeymen to obtain employment; but this obstacle will gradually give way, and special means of mechanical training ought to be provided by the benevolent for colored boys and girls. It is my earnest purpose to induce the friends of Howard University to add to it such a department, at an early day, as a very important means of elevating the colored race.

I have dwelt upon this industrial "reproach" the more particularly, because right habits in this respect have so much to do with that gradual accumulation of property without which the colored race will neither respect itself nor gain the respect of others. For the acquisition of property ordinarily indicates a degree of industry, capacity, shrewdness, prudence, and thrift which does honor to one's manhood; while continued poverty is naturally taken to show a want of ability, intelligence, and good habits. And as the possession of money enables one to accomplish important private and public ends, it operates, like other power, to give respectability and influence. You have heard of the Boston merchant who, when taken to task, many years ago, for having a colored man in his pew at church, replied: "Why, he is from the West Indies. He is the commercial

head of the firm with which our house does business. He is worth half a million of dollars!" Upon which the faultfinders replied, "Oh! Is that so? That alters the case. Please introduce us." Whether the story be true in fact, or not, it is true to human nature, and indicates a useful moral.

2. *Next in order, it is well to notice that part of the "reproach of Egypt" which relates to intellectual condition.* It was no fault of the slaves in this land that they were ignorant. It was the effect of condition, not of race or color. How much of the boasted "wisdom of the Egyptians" did the white Israelite bondmen obtain at their bitter task of brick-making? Work from early dawn till dusky eve, on tobacco, cotton, and sugar plantations, or in rice-swamps, and under laws which by heavy penalties prohibited the teaching of a slave the letters of the alphabet, could only result in a wholesale crushing out of mind. And so it has come to pass, that ignorance is a badge of bondage, "a reproach of Egypt." When we reflect that the present intelligence of the white race is the product of education and special advantages enjoyed by many generations, so that a white child starts with valuable hereditary traits, and has all possible subsequent assistance from the best schools and from the daily intercourse of enlightened society, we can well understand the causes which have hitherto consigned the colored people to mental darkness. But now they must find a Gilgal, and "roll off" this "reproach." That which was true of slavery must not be true of freedom, or freedom will be a failure. The privileges of education must be used to their utmost by every man, woman, and child of African blood, until a dark complexion shall no more suggest the idea of ignorance than does a white skin. Until that time shall come, the old "reproach" will adhere.

All can understand that the scars of a slave who had been often and severely whipped, could testify, after he had received his freedom, to what had been his condition. To his dying day they would say to every one who saw them: "This man was once a slave. The mark of his bondage is upon him!" But remember that the mind may have scars, as well as the body, and that ignorance is such a scar in the black man. Get rid of it, then, my colored friends, if possible. The opportunity exists. Government is providing common-school education for the colored children. There is much to try your feelings in some of the arrangements; but do not, on that account, lose the chance to learn. Be more anxious, at present, to secure education than to cast ballots and hold office. No intelligent class of the population can long be excluded, in any state, from the place which it is fitted to occupy. "Knowledge is power," as Lord Bacon pithily said. Let the colored people become intelligent, and it will be impossible to keep them in any position of weakness and inferiority. But no outward franchises and legal guaranties can raise them to honor and respect, if they are weighed down with ignorance. They

must learn to speak correctly, to think clearly, to understand ordinary matters with intelligence, to cultivate a taste for reading, for art, and for all elevating influences.

They must also furnish a suitable proportion of those in professional life, and who, therefore, require a higher education. The community must be accustomed to see colored teachers and professors, colored physicians and lawyers, colored editors and clergymen, colored architects, civil engineers, and statesmen, equal in attainments and skill with their white brethren. Not to see the learned professions occupied by those of African descent would be a significant omission, which would be a continual reminder of the old condition and the disabilities by which it was accompanied. My connection with the Howard University has naturally called my special attention to this point, and I am convinced that among the needful steps to be taken to insure the "rolling off" of "the reproach of Egypt," arising from the effects of former bondage, must be the preparation of educated colored men to be intelligent leaders of their people in social, ecclesiastical, and political life. For this purpose the doors of Howard University, in this capital of the Nation, have been opened, irrespective of race or color, to all who desire a higher education, collegiate, legal, theological, and medical. Thus would we attract to the city whence the Proclamation of Emancipation went forth, those colored youth from all the States of the Union who may properly desire to qualify themselves for the higher positions in life. It was well for the Israelites that, when they left the land of bondage, and took with them the degradations of their former condition, they had, in Moses a leader "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in words and in deeds." Humanly speaking, their future honor and prosperity were wrapped up in him. Equally do the colored people in this country need men of their own race, who shall be thoroughly qualified to guide them through the desert of their disciplinary experience.

Yet at this point a cautionary word must be frankly uttered. There is danger that the colored people, in the natural ambition which is aroused by the new opportunities of freedom, will seek to occupy places for which they are not as yet fitted; and that their ideas of the needful education will be superficial. A little learning is proverbially a dangerous thing; and when vanity puts it to use, it brings more contempt than honor. No man is really raised to honor, when artificially elevated in position. His defects in that case, become the more glaring. True wisdom, therefore, dictates that colored students should make of themselves thorough scholars, and, acquire solid learning. They do themselves and their race a positive discredit and injury, when they get a little smattering of knowledge, and then assume the airs and literary titles of educated men; even if they can find literary institutions weak enough to aid in the deceptive process. Of what use is a certificate or diploma, or honorary degree,

which is contradicted by every letter which the bearer has occasion to write?

And colored men should be careful to put forward, as their representatives and candidates for positions of honor, only those who give evidence of marked ability and thorough scholarship. It is of small avail, for example, to secure admission by political influence for a colored cadet into West Point or Annapolis, if he is to fail in his examination, or if he is to go through at the bottom of his class. Prejudice will never die out in such circumstances. But the moment a colored young man shall be found in the upper division of his class, in either of those national institutions, he will compel respect from professors and fellow-students. It is a mistaken policy, to be relying on compassionate favor because one is colored; hoping, and, perhaps, even claiming to be allowed to do or to receive, what no white man in the circumstances would expect to do or receive. Instead of being an assertion of manhood, that is a perpetuation of pauperism.

Some thirty-five years ago, I met that stalwart Abolitionist and prince of editors, Joshua Leavitt, with whom I was then intimate, on the sidewalk, in Boston, in front of the office of *The Emancipator*, which was under his editorial charge. Said he, with a merry twinkle in his eye: "Brother Patton, I have just succeeded in converting our anti-Slavery Committee to the doctrine of no distinction of color. We have been having *The Emancipator* printed by colored printers, so as to help them in business; but they have done it so wretchedly, that we have had endless complaints from our subscribers, and have been very much ashamed of its appearance. Our remonstrances with the printers have produced no effect; and so, after long labor with our Committee, who felt that they must help colored men, I have persuaded them to put away their prejudice against white printers, and give the work to those who will do it properly." And he added that this was the truest kindness to the colored man—to make him feel that he must rely on his business merits, and not on somebody's compassion; that he must do his work well, if he wanted men to give him work to do.

It is better for the colored man to be patient and modest, waiting till his intelligence and ability shall claim the deserved place for him, than to be making ambitious, premature claims, on the ground of color. When that time shall come, nobody can keep him out of his place. If he is in too great haste to take the time, first for education and then for accomplishment, or is too slothful to make good use of his opportunities, his ambition to secure position will only direct attention to the superficial nature of his attainments, and will provoke derision and disgust. Whereas when his ability and intelligence testify plainly in his behalf, he can ask and expect honorable and lucrative positions, not as a colored man, but as a man.

In insisting upon intelligence, I would take special pleasure in commending the education of young women, as well as of young men. The female sex deserves the privilege of mental culture equally with

the other sex. In Howard University we have our "Miner Hall," with its rooms for the young women, as well as our "Clark Hall," with its rooms for the young men. All departments of the University are equally open to both sexes, and numbers of ladies of both races have availed themselves of our Normal and Medical Departments: for girls need access to the higher as well as to the common education, to develop their proper genius, and to fit them to be the wives of well-educated men, and the mothers of the coming generations. It were a sad miscalculation, to give the best culture to the choicest young men, and to qualify them to be editors and artists, lawyers and statesmen, clergymen and physicians, and not to provide life-companions of equal intelligence and refinement. It would be cruelty practiced on the most sensitive part of one's being, to compel an educated man so to wed that, when he retired from his office to his home, from the circle of his professional comrades to the bosom of his family, he should pass from knowledge to ignorance, from culture to coarseness. The very worst effects of slavery were wrought in its degradation of woman, whom it made a mere working and breeding animal. That freedom should operate a change in her sphere of labor, that she should be removed from the field to the house, and should exchange the hoe for the needle, does something to "roll away the reproach of Egypt;" but not enough. She must have a proper development of mind, that she may duly preside as queen in the domestic realm, entering with sympathetic zeal and pleasure into the pursuits of her husband, and training with intelligent care the children whom God may give her. For freedom will be but a small blessing, if it shall exhibit ungoverned and rude children, who have lost the old control of masters and mistresses, and have no proper parental restraint and guidance. There is danger on this side; for there are those who declare that they prefer the parents to the children, the old folks to the young folks, among the colored people; because the former are steady, industrious, and well-mannered, while the latter are often averse to labor, without firmness of purpose or definite aim in life, and lacking in respect for age and station. The surest corrective for any such tendency will be, to provide well-educated wives and mothers.

3. *The remaining part of "the reproach of Egypt," which the colored people should be anxious to "roll off," pertains to morals and religion.* Bondage is not favorable to pure morals or to genuine religion. It has tempted every race, in every age, to low vices and to an ignorant superstition. How could it operate otherwise, when it keeps knowledge from the mind, and uses man or woman only for physical purposes? It degraded the Israelites, who learned the immoralities and the idolatries of Egypt, and were with difficulty rescued from them by diligent instruction and a series of severe chastisements. Nor did they come back to their proper and full covenant relations to Jehovah, as a circumcised people, till the occurrence at Gilgal, which

"rolled off" the heathenish "reproach." American slavery was as full of evil for its victims. It taught them to regard themselves as the property of masters, like oxen and horses, rather than as self-respecting human beings. It deprived them of the necessary protection of their persons, it denied legal marriage, it took away parental control of children, it reduced them to utter poverty, it kept them in a constant state of alarm for themselves and for those who were dear to them, and it encouraged only animal pleasures and low indulgences, by making almost all others impossible. Thus circumstanced and trained, how could they develop moral integrity and religious purity? They easily and surely fell into the usual sins of oppressed classes, and learned to lie, to steal, to indulge in violations of the Seventh Commandment, and to look for their enjoyment to eating, drinking, and wild, senseless merrymaking. Forbidden to read the Bible, they were shut up to oral instruction, imperfect traditions, and heathenish superstitions; they were delivered over to ignorant preachers, who arose among themselves; and they were taught to separate religion from morality, and to confound nervous excitement and bodily convulsions with the operations of the Holy Spirit. Emancipation found them in a moral degradation upon which the whites looked with contempt, viewing with suspicion the truthfulness, honesty, and purity of the whole race, and regarding their religion as a wild excitement, full of noise, but destitute of principle. No doubt, injustice was done in such sweeping condemnation; but the actual facts were sad enough. What is now of the utmost importance is, that this "reproach of Egypt" should, as rapidly as possible, be "rolled away," by the introduction of enlightening and elevating influences; such as a better educated ministry, a more thorough church discipline, Sunday-school instruction for both young and old, and the creation of a public sentiment among the colored people, which shall make every violation of chastity, truth, and honesty a deep disgrace, and shall favor the higher forms of recreation and the less noisy and senseless modes of worship. They must have schools, not only for the purposes of general intelligence, but in order that religion may be saved from disrespect; that infidelity may not spring up among the educated children, who cannot be content with the religious ideas and practices of their parents; and that their church leaders may be thoroughly qualified for their present position and new work. I once heard one of our trustees, a most distinguished representative of the colored people, of whose talents and success in life they may well be proud, Frederick Douglass, Marshal of the District of Columbia, say, in a very practical address at a school-house dedication in this city, that he sometimes thought that the colored people appeared at their worst in their religious exercises, and especially at a camp-meeting; where they would address God in a manner of noise and rudeness in which they would never think of approaching President Hayes! This is a "reproach of Egypt," a remnant of the experience of bondage; and

it will be "rolled away" as fast as increasing intelligence shall create an elevated taste and a new sense of propriety. Already the improvement is marked, and there are colored congregations, in this city and elsewhere, where the worship and the preaching will compare favorably with those of any class of the population.

Every friend of the colored race should, for the purpose now under consideration, bid God-speed to their efforts in the temperance cause. The colored people have a special danger, since emancipation, in the direction of intemperance. Slavery kept out liquor, by withholding money and retaining the laborers upon plantations. Freedom brings wages and the opportunity to obtain strong drink. Consequently, sad reports reach me from some sections of the South, of the increase of drunkenness among the colored people. Two years ago, in a long temperance procession, which paraded the streets of Washington, I saw no colored men, though hundreds of them lined the sidewalks as spectators. If this was because the spirit of caste excluded them from the ranks, the fact was a disgrace to the white temperance reformers of Washington; but if it was because the colored race has no interest in this reform, it speaks sadly for its future, and begets a fear that many of them will add a new "reproach" to its name, instead of "rolling away" the old ones.

No doubt the great outward obstacle in the way of the colored race in this land is the spirit of caste on the part of the whites. The effect of it is powerful, universal, and cruel. It has the strength of growth of more than two centuries. It has been taught to children so early, it has been inculcated by such omnipresent example, it has been so constantly assumed to be a dictate of Nature itself, it has so absolutely controlled society, industrial arrangements, politics, education, and religion, that it has almost appeared like a doom of inferiority upon the African race. Legislation has had as little power against it as preaching. It seemed to run in the blood of the American white race. Even where law made a place for the Negro by the side of the Caucasian, as it did in the National Military Academy at West Point, caste threw around the unfortunate black cadet an icy atmosphere of complete social isolation, such as might freeze to the heart a student who did not keep burning within the fires of ambition and faith. It is not so bad in Northern colleges generally, as that a colored student's room is but a crevice in a glacier; but it is still true, that no class has ever had to run a race so weighed down with disadvantages—despised for being degraded, and yet forbidden to rise out of degradation! American caste, in all base qualities, ranks with Hindu caste. *But it is not insuperable.* Yet time must be an important element in the victory. For the new and favorable association of ideas with the race, which will remove the foundations of prejudice, can only spring up gradually, in the course of years, as the evidence is presented of industry, thrift, wealth, knowledge, culture, morality, and religion. But when the new character has been wrought out, and the consequent favorable reputation has been gained; when

a dark skin shall no longer suggest the presence of low qualities; when thus the fact of race shall cease to have importance, and each individual shall stand upon his own merits, irrespective of descent or color, then caste will necessarily die. There is no need of emigrating to Africa (as some are ready to suggest) in order to rise above it, any more than there is a necessity for sending the Irish back to Ireland, or the Jews to Palestine. To all three of these races, in this country, the original birthplace of their people is a foreign land, destitute of any but missionary attractions, and offering no true home. The five millions of our population who have African blood belong to America. They constitute the tenth part of the people, they find the soil and climate of one-half of our country peculiarly congenial, and they are necessary to its prosperity. For the time being, they inherit certain disadvantages from the past; but freedom offers the opportunity to "roll away the reproach of Egypt," to overcome the force of old associations, and to conquer an honorable position. This cannot be accomplished by protesting, by preaching, or by legislating against it. It must be the result of actual elevation. Caste can be deliberately lived down. It can be buried out of sight by the accumulating evidence of the real worth and advancement of the colored people. And I would say to the students and alumni of Howard University: Be it your constant purpose to rely on such means for its removal from your path. Count every one of your people an enemy to his race, who does anything to encourage idleness, ignorance, vice, coarseness, superstition, or irreligion. Make him feel that he thereby not only injures himself, but wrongs his brethren. He is doing what he can to perpetuate "the reproach of Egypt," and to intensify the prejudice of which you complain. He is trying to keep the worst curse of slavery, after slavery itself has been abolished. Put him to shame, as the common foe, against whom all should unite. But consider those to be your truest heroes, who set the example of industry, education, and moral purity. Let them be your leaders in church and state, in preference to such as speak flattering words, and seek your praise, your votes, or your money, rather than your improvement.

Take encouragement from what has already been accomplished. During the brief fifteen years which have elapsed since the close of the war, what people have made such rapid improvement as they who only then began to be, as they suddenly changed from chattels to men? They have not only maintained the vast industry of half the country, but have been gradually fitting themselves for their exalted position as citizens of this proud republic. Hundreds of thousands of their children have learned to read and write; multitudes have qualified themselves to teach the ordinary branches of a common school education; and not a few have pursued the higher branches, and entered the learned professions. Meanwhile, some advance has been made in acquiring property, especially in the form of homes, and in learning new trades and occupations. Ambition to excel has been aroused, and, although in certain States a temporary check has



been given, a rising tide of intelligence and industrious thrift will ere long sweep away artificial barriers. God has ordained the future of the colored race, and man cannot prevent it; even that God who "made of one blood all nations of men," who gave his Son to die equally for every descendant of Adam, and who declared through his apostle "that there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Jesus Christ."

A special application of the truth insisted upon in this discourse may be made to those who this week shall graduate from the college department of this University. They have had special opportunities for rising above the disadvantages of their people, and thus for "rolling away the reproach of Egypt." They should be prepared by all these years of education, for illustrating, in their own persons, the better qualities of their race. It becomes them henceforth to show, by their industry, intelligence, and moral character, that they are worthy of their privileges, and thus furnish a living refutation of the slanderers of their people. A college training should fit them for positions of higher influence than would otherwise be open to them; should prepare them to be leaders of their race, in thought and action. And competent leaders are precisely what the colored race in this country especially needs, to save it from the blunders and corruption, in church and state, of those who now lead without ability or character; and to preserve it from white demagogues, who flatter and cajole for selfish purposes. Try, my young friends, to impress upon your people the idea that their future is in their own hands, and will be precisely what they shall make it. They must "roll off the reproach of Egypt" for themselves. No one can do it for them; and the sooner they cease to be petitioners, seeking favors, looking to Government, or to political parties, or to religious bodies, or to the benevolent public, to be nursed and carried and supported, and strike out boldly, courageously, manfully, to create a future by industry, thrift, intelligence, and character, the sooner will they "possess the promised land." The professors and trustees of this institution will be greatly disappointed, if its graduates shall not be found taking the lead in this self-respecting policy; and they have faith that when the hour of triumph arrives — as surely it will — it will be found that some part of the victory is due, under God, to the influence of Howard University.

# HOWARD UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, D. C.

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This institution has special claims upon the sympathy and aid of the philanthropist and Christian, as a child of that Providence which emancipated, by the late war, four millions of minds as well as of bodies, and it aims to solve the great national problem which stands connected with the relations of the white and colored races in the United States.

**ADVANTAGES OF SITUATION.**—The institution overlooks Washington from the North, and is accessible by two lines of street cars. The buildings are commodious, tasteful, and sufficient for more than double the number of students now under instruction. Being at the Capital of the country, it enjoys a grand opportunity to illustrate to influential men of all sections the possibility of overcoming caste-feeling, and of elevating the colored race to an equality with others, intellectually and morally. Students also are naturally attracted to such a locality, and feel its inspiration, while they find more or less opportunity for self-support in various forms of labor. The present students come from twenty-six States, besides the District and Canada. Evidently a success in Washington will be such a success, before all the world, as could hardly be true of any institution located elsewhere.

**OPPORTUNITIES OF EDUCATION.**—The University is open to students of both sexes and of whatever race. It has these several departments: Academical (including Normal, Preparatory, and Collegiate), Medical, Legal, and Theological. In the Medical Department, such are the advantages, that a majority of the students are white. The Theological Department had fifty students in the year just closed—some quite mature in age—in various preparatory, special, and regular courses, some of them already preachers, in a humble way, in their respective denominations. In the other departments worthy young persons are seeking to prepare for all the different vocations in life. They come from the abodes of poverty, and help themselves, so far as opportunity offers, by labor, at leisure hours and during vacations. But such earnings are usually insufficient. The charge for tuition is only \$12 a year, and room-rent is the same; while board is furnished at \$5 per month. No charge is made for tuition or room-rent to students for the gospel ministry. Since the institution opened, 1,500 students have enjoyed its advantages, of whom 148 were in Law, 207 in Medicine, 125 in Theology, 98 in College, and some 1,200 in the Preparatory and Normal Course.

**SPECIAL NEEDS.**—With extensive buildings and grounds, costing \$500,000, the institution has no available endowments. Its temporary dependence is on rents, tuition-fees, and other scanty resources. With endowments for the professorships, it could not only permanently sustain the present limited arrangements for instruction, but could greatly enlarge them, to the advantage of the interests concerned. If permanent scholarships, of \$1,000 or \$1,500 each, could be secured, the best talent among the needy might be educated for important service. Even with temporary annual scholarships of \$50 or \$100, the number of deserving students could soon be doubled. Often a donation of \$15 or \$20 will suffice to supplement the resources of a student, so as to enable him to go through the year. A large addition to the female students could be made, if friends would enable the institution to render slight aid. Churches, Sunday schools, and individuals will here find a noble opportunity to do good, by contributions of money, clothing, bedding, stationery, &c.

**ENCOURAGING PROSPECTS.**—The entire former debt, of over \$100,000, has been paid off, and no incumbrance is on the buildings or lands. Congress has also given a national endorsement and character to the University, by a recent appropriation in its behalf. Leading men of influence, such as Senator Hoar, of Massachusetts, Judge Strong, of the United States Supreme Court, and General Eaton, Commissioner of Education, have lately expressed, in writing, their emphatic approval of its work and management. It has also secured the confidence and co-operation of many Southerners, clergymen and statesmen, two of whom have been placed on the Board of Trustees, and one on the Theological Faculty. That the principles taught in the institution may be better understood by the public, the foregoing discourse, by the President, Rev. William W. Patton, D. D., is published by the Executive Committee.



